DEATH IN THE MAKING: ROBERT CAPA'S CONSTRUCTION OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Ashley Godevais

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Coleman Hutchison
Department of English
Supervising Professor

_____

Judith Coffin
Department of History
Second Reader

Abstract

Author: Ashley Godevais

Title: Death in the Making: Robert Capa's Construction of the Spanish Civil War

Supervising Professors: Coleman Hutchison, Judith Coffin

Published in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War, Death in the Making established Robert Capa as one of the greatest war photographers of the 20th century. Though photography can be used merely to provide evidence for the existence of an event, place, or person in history, the study of Capa's book reveals a construction of the Spanish civil war which serves both the author's political and personal agenda. From the way Capa structured his book, to his use of captions and deliberate misrepresentations of chronology and location, his photographs are actively curated and influenced by the photographer himself to elicit anti-Fascist sympathies. This thesis explores Capa's background, which gave him motivation for an unapologetically critical view of the Nationalist ideology and equipped him with the technique and temerity to capture the horrors of the Spanish Civil War.

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Introduction

"To collect photographs is to collect the world," Susan Sontag wrote. The pervasiveness of photography has given us the sense that we can store the world's experiences in our minds as an album of images.[1] Before the emergence of photography, the practice of recording the events of war was accomplished through descriptive etchings. Goya's *Los Desastres de la Guerra* consisted of eighty-three etchings, made between 1810 and 1820, which portray Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808. Goya's etchings were an interpretation of the atrocities of the war, but they inflicted a level of shock that set a precedent for visual depictions of suffering.[2] Though horrific in nature, the etchings allowed the viewer a certain distance from the happenings of the war. Those who were not directly involved and lived abroad could opt to pretend as if the conflict did not exist. The establishment of war photography during the Crimean War brought battle to the world's livings rooms, for the first time, via photographs published in newspapers and magazines. Today, technology functions in such a way that society experiences instantaneous dissemination of photographs, and the atrocities of global conflicts are impossible to ignore.

Photography played a particularly central role in the Spanish Civil War. The ideological conflict instigated a migration of foreign artists and intellectuals to Spain who published works and in some cases, fought in the war. This war saw the rise of one of the greatest war photographers of the 20th century: Robert Capa. He and his colleagues became famous for travelling to the front lines and risking their lives among soldiers to deliver images of the conflict to the public. Capa's 1938 book, *Death in the Making*, serves as a partial photographic history of

[1] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 3.
[2] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 44.

the war. It exists in an extensive tradition of war literature from the period. This thesis examines Capa's book's contribution to our understanding of photography and the Spanish Civil War as well as its service to both Capa's political and personal agendas. It explores Capa's background, which gave him motivation for an unashamedly critical view of the Nationalist ideology and equipped him with the skill and boldness to capture the horrors of the Spanish Civil War.

Robert Capa found his artistic purpose and voice as a disenfranchised refugee. He became active in leftist politics from an early age and spent much of his young adult life fleeing totalitarian regimes across Europe. His experiences as an object of oppressive, discriminatory governments gave him a significant stake in the outcome of the Spanish Civil War. He earnestly sympathized with the plight of the Spaniards fighting to defend their country from a fascist regime. Like many other artists, Capa's photographs became his weapon. He could contribute to the anti-fascist cause by producing work that induced tremendous sympathy in its audience. *Death in the Making* shows the influence of this political agenda. He focused his camera on the atrocities occurring on the battlefields, the devastation of daily life across Spain, and the Loyalists' tremendous spirit. His combination of these subjects along with a purposeful use of captions skillfully portrays a nation of people fighting for their freedom against a vicious insurgent force.

Capa reinvented himself to shed the confines of what he perceived to be his inferior background so that he might accomplish his goal of becoming a world-famous photographer. He held the persona that he created to exceptionally high standards and worked his entire life to perfect and fully assume its characteristics. *Death in the Making* reflects an endeavor to maximize Capa's public impression. He desired to present highly dramatic work, which would perpetuate his image as a daring, heroic celebrity. The photographs and captions of dangerous

environments, real or exaggerated, emphasized his willingness to potentially sacrifice his life to capture the finest photograph.

Capa's motives manifest themselves in his images in *Death in the Making*, which are dramatized and enhanced by captions, misrepresentations of time and location, and other textual instruments. The result is a very carefully curated presentation of the war, which effectively elicits sympathy for the anti-fascist faction and promotes the ideal image of his concocted persona.

Part 1: The Photograph

I photograph what I do not wish to paint and I paint what I cannot photograph.

~Man Ray

The nature of the photograph lies on a spectrum between providing absolute truth and delivering a photographer's fabrication. Roland Barthes argues that a photograph is characterized by its ability to prove the existence of its content. He terms this capacity to prove the presence of a subject "that-has-been" photography's "*noeme*," or its essence.[3] A photograph does not reincarnate the past. Rather it authenticates the existence of the certain being or object that it features. Take as an example, Alexander Gardner's photograph of a medical staff group from the American Civil War.[4] This photograph reveals no curious or exceptional meaning; it is not a memory or fantasy. The photograph does, however, provide a truth that one could not derive from a painting of an identical scene. It reveals with certainty that the men pictured existed. Even without a memory from this exact event, the photograph proves that the six men featured were in this scene at the moment it was captured. Photographs have the power, though, to reveal more than the existence of objects or beings. They can, through the proof of the subject of the image, certify the existence of a larger event. Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, illustrates how Richard Avedon's portrait of "William Casby, Born a Slave" proves the existence of slavery.[5] As one observes the image and concludes that the man pictured was a slave, one also comes to realize that his existence certifies the uncomfortable truth that slavery existed. One must be careful

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[3] Roland Barthes and Geoff Dyer, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 76-77, originally published as *La Chambre Claire* (n.p.: Editions du Seuil, 1980).

[4] Alexander Gardner, No. 7356. Warrenton, Virginia. Dr. Jonathan Letterman, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac and Staff, November 1862, photograph.

[5] Barthes and Dyer, *Camera Lucida*, 79.

though in drawing great conclusions from one photograph. A photograph can tell the truth, but it is always the truth as perceived by the photographer. Sontag asserts that a photograph "cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude."[6] Photography invites a continual struggle between the veracity of the subject and the influences of the photographer.

We are empowered to think that seeing a photograph is the same as understanding the truth about its subject because of the image's seemingly impartial nature. Written words, paintings and drawings regarding a person or an event are an interpretation of the subject, influenced by their creator. Photographs differ slightly. They are snapshots of reality, depicting real people or objects that once existed. In this way, they appear more grounded in certainty than other art works, but the photograph does not escape bias. They are an interpretation of the world like paintings and drawings, captured through the eyes of the photographer. An assumption of veracity gives photographers a sexy, authoritative voice, but their work is not an exception to the "usually shady commerce between art and truth."[7] To observe a photograph is to observe the photographer's perception of an experience. Photographers make choices throughout the capture and development process, which compel the viewer to digest a subject from a certain vantage point. They have the power to portray an object or event as it exists, or they may shape a subject to suit their purpose. Furthermore, the selection of specific photographs for a book or exhibition by its publishers can tell a story and influence the way it is perceived by an observer.

Though photography can be used merely to provide evidence for the existence of an event, place, or person in history, the study of Robert Capa's book, *Death in the Making,*

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[6] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain*, 46.
[7] Ibid., 6.

demonstrates that photographic works do not necessarily furnish the truth. Rather, they reflect an influenced interpretation and visualization of an event. They mirror the convictions of the person behind the camera. Robert Capa was a celebrated war photographer who was world renowned for his iconic images of war. And yet, his life and work were riddled with fantasy and controversy. While we often think of photographs as furnishing evidence and truth, his book shows that photographs are often managed, curated. With the knowledge that his photographs do not necessarily furnish evidence, we can discover a great deal about the man behind the camera.

Part II: The Photographer

Early life

It's not enough to have talent, you also have to be Hungarian.[8]

~Robert Capa

Robert Capa was born André Erno Friedmann on October 22, 1913 on the Pest side of Budapest, Hungary.[9] He was born with a full head of hair and an extra finger, which led his mother to predict that André would someday become a famous man.[10] She was correct, although fame found him by another name. André grew up in a period of political turmoil in Hungary following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The declared independent republic shortly fell into the hands of a coalition of Socialists and Communists and then into those of the Rumanian army. Their anti-communist campaign carried a vicious anti-Semitic tone, and this, along with the effects of the 1929 American stock market crash, contributed to André's growing interest in politics and feeling of homelessness. It was this combination that brought André's attention to journalism. His decision to make his career as a journalist was undoubtedly influenced by his political interest and the opportunity for travel that the field held. André's friends remembered that their and André's desire to leave Hungary was "like a fever."[11]

As a young adult, André became keenly involved in political demonstrations and even considered joining the Communist Party. He later changed his mind because he found that the

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[8] Whelan, Richard. *Robert Capa: a biography*. (New York, NY: Knopf, 1985), 271.
[9] Richard Whelan records Capa's given first name as Endré. I use André because that is the spelling on his government documents.
[10] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 3.
[11] Ibid., 17.

views of a recruiter he met with "were far less radical than [he] had hoped."[12] Sometime after this meeting, André was arrested by the secret police, beaten and left in a cell. His father managed to have him released from jail on the condition that André leave Hungary. His subsequent journey to Berlin marked the beginning of the adventure and escape from political and social injustice that he had been dreaming of. He would soon find, however, that there would be no avoiding the severe ideological conflicts that faced Europe. *Death in the Making* features several photographs of Spaniards forced into exile from their homes just as André was exiled from his. The reader can clearly see his background's influence in these emotional photographs.

Introduction to Photography

How is this photography? Do you like it? I'm thinking of doing it myself.[13]

~Robert Capa

André Friedmann went into photography for practical reasons more than a passion for picture making. In fact, when he started his job as a dark room assistant for the agency Dephot in Berlin, he knew very little about photography. After some months in Berlin, André needed to generate money, and due to his rudimentary German skills, "decided to become a photographer, which was the nearest thing to journalism for anyone who found himself without a language."[14] Though photography began as his second-choice occupation, he quickly became infatuated with the fast-paced environment at Dephot and started recording daily life in Berlin with a borrowed Leica camera. Once again, he found himself in the middle of a political and cultural battle

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[12] Capa, Robert. *Robert Capa, 1913-1954*. Edited by Cornell Capa (New York, NY: Grossman Publishers, 1974), 8.
[13] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 30.
[14] Kershaw, Alex. *Blood and Champagne: The Life and Times of Robert Capa* (London: Macmillan, 2002), 16.

between the Left and Right. Amid mounting violence and the Nazi uprising, André received his first assignment from Dephot, to photograph Leon Trotsky giving a speech on Russia.

In his first act as a professional photographer, Friedmann established the tone that set the rest of his career by getting closer to Trotsky than any other photographer at the event. Trotsky did not like to be photographed, so the other photographers carrying large cameras were not allowed into the room. The minimal size of André's Leica allowed him unprecedented proximity, resulting in a photograph with a uniquely dramatic and intimate nature.[15]

His famous claim "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough" began with his bold approach at this event. The significance he placed on being as close as possible to his subject became a trademark of his photographs. They have a sense of intimacy that draws the viewer into the scene he has captured. He redefined the way in which war photographers

[15] Photographs sourced from the International Center of Photography and Magnum Photos.

interacted with war. While his predecessors often photographed the aftermath of battles once the fighting had moved on, Capa inserted himself into danger in real time. In his autobiography, *Slightly Out of Focus*, Capa describes his proximity to death in the World War II landings at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France:

> exhausted from the water and fear, we lay flat on a small strip of wet sand between the sea and barbed wire. The slant of the beach gave us some protection, so long as we lay flat, from the machine-gun and rifle bullets, but the tide pushed us against the barbed wire, where the guns were enjoying open season…I took out my second Contax camera and began to shoot without raising my head.[16]

He approached his work with a certain willingness to sacrifice his life for the best shot. His photographs from the D-Day landings emit an urgency that reflects the chaos of the invasion and Capa's position in the thick of the battle.

[16] Robert Capa, *Slightly out of Focus* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947), 147-148.

Capa's photographs prove that he still preferred to be close to his subjects even when the situation was not risky. The great majority of the photographs in *Death in the Making* focus in on the people of the war rather than display expansive background scenes. One of his photographs from Madrid depicting a soldier writing a letter shows Capa's style

He frames the picture around the soldier's body and does not give much attention to the surroundings. This choice allowed him to capture very clearly the seriousness with which the soldier wrote his letter home.

Capa's debut photograph made its way into the German magazine *Der Welt Spiegel*, but it did not manage to turn around his financial fortunes. André would not work for some time, as he fled country after country, running from the totalitarian regimes threatening Europe. He decided to leave Berlin at the beginning of the Third Reich and fled to Vienna alongside other artists, Jews and intellectuals. Once there, he found he still was not safe. He returned home to

Hungary, but shortly after decided to go to Paris. If André Friedmann had stayed in Budapest, it is likely that Robert Capa would never have been brought to life.

The Creation of Robert Capa

I am working under a new name. They call me Robert Capa.[17]

~a letter written from Capa to his mother

André found even worse financial fortunes in Paris than he had in Berlin. Like many other refugees, he lived in low-end hotels and struggled to find food, let alone work. With Germans moving into every part of the city, the immigrant community, consisting largely of Eastern European Jews and artists, found their sense of community in the cafes of Montparnasse. The cafes became a communal living space where friends came to play chess, write books and letters, argue about politics and try to forget their intense feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.[18] It was here, in Café du Dome, that André met some of his closest companions and future colleagues including David "Chim" Szymin and Henri Cartier-Bresson. André's experiences in Paris were critical for his future, as he met the group of artists that he would someday travel to Spain with. He discussed politics with them in cafés and further developed his anti-fascist beliefs. It was through a series of coincidences that André met the woman who would change his and Robert Capa's life forever. André's boss from Dephot visited Paris and sought out André to shoot some photographs for a Swiss firm. He picked up an unfamiliar woman from a coffee shop whom he thought would make an ideal model, and because she did not want to be alone with a strange man she convinced her roommate, Gerda Pohorylles, to accompany her.

[17] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 80.
[18] Ibid., 54.

Gerda not only grew to be André's great love, but she was in many ways responsible for the creation of Robert Capa and his subsequent fame. Many of the photographs from the Spanish Civil War that began his career and provoked Stefan Lorant of *Picture Post* to claim that Capa was "The Greatest War Photographer in the World" were taken by Gerda[19]. She was not credited for many of the photographs that she took; however, her greatest, largely unknown accomplishment, was arguably the creation of the Robert Capa character. John Hersey wrote in his review of Capa's *Slightly out of Focus* that

> Capa, the photographer who is credited by his colleagues and competitors with having taken the greatest pictures of the Second World War, does not exist. Capa is an invention. There is a thing in the shape of a man...and this thing walks along and calls itself Capa and is famous. Yet it has no actuality. It is an invention all the time and in all respects.[20]

Gerda conceived a plan to invent a wealthy, accomplished American photographer named Robert Capa. André would pose as Capa's dark room assistant while actually taking the photographs, and Gerda, who traded in her last name for the name Taro, would sell the photographs as Capa's at the escalated price warranted for an international photographer. André and Gerda derived the name Robert Capa from a combination of the actor Robert Taylor and the famous film director Frank Capra.[21] This alter-ego encompassed everything that André Friedmann wanted to be. At the time of its conception, André was a poor Jewish immigrant. His environment already treated his kind as outsiders, and it was rapidly increasing in its intolerance. As Robert Capa, André could be successful, wealthy, and American. He could gain exposure as a photographer that he

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[19] Stefan Lorant, "The Greatest War Photographer in the World: Robert Capa," *Picture Post*, December 3, 1938.
[20] John Hersey, "The Man Who Invented Himself," in Robert Capa 1913-1954, by Robert Capa, ed. Cornell Capa (New York, NY: Grossman Publishers, 1974), 14.
[21] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 81.

would not have had as a bohemian immigrant and be celebrated internationally. From the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, André fully embraced his new identity as Robert Capa, though his work continued to show the distinct influence of the struggling immigrant, André Friedmann. When André assumed the persona of Capa, he developed a continuous concern for how he was perceived by the public. He worked to perfect and solidify the image of this celebrity photographer that they had created. He did so in his personal life by dramatically enhancing his romantic relationship with Gerda Taro. His care for self-presentation manifested itself in his work as well through the enhancements he gave his photographs to make them as dramatic as possible.

Style of photography

If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough.[22]

~Robert Capa

The quality and uniqueness of Robert Capa's photographs did not arise solely from his technical skills with a camera or developing film. Rather, his experiences as a member of a persecuted social and ethnic group during an extremely unstable period in Europe allowed him to develop a strong sense of empathy, which is evident in his photographs. John Steinbeck wrote in a memorial about Capa that he "proved beyond all doubt that the camera...is as good as the man who uses it," and that Capa's "pictures were made in his brain - the camera only completed them."[23] It was this instinct of knowing where the most effective and emotional shot was in any scene that made Capa's photographs so compelling. And his work did not end after his camera

[22] Ibid., 211.
[23] Steinbeck, John. "No One Can Take His Place." In Robert Capa 1913-1954, by Robert Capa, Edited by Cornell Capa (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974), 123.

captured an image. He could adeptly frame photographs to promote his desired effect. He often found the most impactful shots not in the heat of battle but in the faces of people. For the duration of his career, Capa focused his camera predominantly on people, not events.[24] Susan Moeller claimed that "what distinguishes Capa from the other photographers...was his "ability to communicat[e] the drama of war rather than [document] the simple facts of it."[25] John Steinbeck concurred, claiming that Capa knew "that you cannot photograph war because it is largely an emotion. But he did photograph that emotion by shooting beside it. He could show the horror of a whole people in the face of a child. His camera caught and held emotion."[26] The validity of Capa's peers' claims is evident in the story that his photographs tell of each war that he covered. From his debut in the Spanish Civil War until his untimely death during the First Indochina War, he produced comprehensive collections of photographs that tell a story of the horrors of war on both the warfront and the home front. He was famous for being indifferent to danger and using any means necessary to get the best shot. Irwin Shaw said that Capa "rode, for forty-one years, toward the sound of the guns, to get them." It is clear from his travels not only in Spain but also into war-torn areas elsewhere in Europe and Asia that he did not fear being in the midst of battle. He was rewarded for this risky behavior with highly effective action photographs and attention from news sources and the public. This behavior also cost him his life in Vietnam when he walked through dangerous territory to get some shots and stepped on a landmine. *Time* correspondent John Mecklin, who was with Capa just before his death, said that "if he saw a good picture which could only be made with risk he took the risk."[27] It was the combination of

[24] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 105.
[25] Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 240.
[26] Steinbeck, "No One Can Take," in *Robert Capa*, 123.
[27] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 299.

empathy, talent, and dedication that allowed Capa to capture all aspects of war. He often risked his own life to deliver the harrowing details of conflict on the battlefield through live action shots and off the battlefield through pictures of the hardships of daily life.

Capa and the Spanish Civil War

During the Spanish civil conflict, I became a war photographer.[28]

~Robert Capa

Understanding the fundamental ideological conflict of the Spanish Civil War is critical to analyzing Capa's photographs in *Death in the Making* as well as its accompanying texts. The war developed out of an internal conflict between the Spanish Left, also called Republicans or Loyalists, supported by the worker's movement and regionalists in Catalonia and the Basque country, and the Right, also called Nationalists, which consisted of the military, the Catholic Church, and those who believed in one Castilian Spain. Both sides referred to the war in different terms. Some deemed it fundamentally a conflict between communism and fascism, or the people versus the oligarchy, while others deemed it Spain versus Anti-Spain, or Christianity versus Atheism.[29] Though the war began within the country's borders, it quickly became a conflict of ideology that captured the attention of the world. Intellectuals and artists across the world became emotionally involved in what they saw as a conflict of values dividing the global community into parts. Artists and writers including George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro, and Alberto Perez, a few of whom were friends with Robert Capa, created works that sympathized with the plight of the Loyalists. They were inspired by political

[28] John G. Morris, "A Two-Quart Bottle of Spirits," in *Robert Capa 1913-1954*, by Robert Capa, ed. Cornell Capa (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974), 99.
[29] Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

convictions and those who, like Capa, were émigrés and members of a marginalized people felt especially that this war against fascism had to be won. Fascist Germany and Italy took advantage of Franco's rebellion to progress their ideology and develop war strategies. Communist Soviet Union provided aid to the Loyalists with the same purpose. Though defined as a civil war, the war quickly evolved into an international conflict as foreign governments began choosing loyalties. One which, many considered, could shift the balance of power in Europe.

Photographs have layers of meaning. Initially they give us an aesthetic experience and, perhaps, a glimpse of life we find meaningful. But, as Pete Turner argues, we can often find hidden in the deepest levels of a photograph the image of the person who constructed it.[30] Capa's photographs from the war not only provide an understanding of the war from his perspective, but also reveal much about his character and influences. For instance, perhaps because of his experiences in countries with rising totalitarian regimes, Capa clearly felt a connection to the Loyalists fighting against the rise of fascism. He sympathized not only with the soldiers fighting at the front line, but also with the citizens struggling to survive the disruption of daily life. He had felt their fear of losing a home as well as their anger at the new authority that sought to oppress them. Capa's approach to photography throughout the war and his resulting photographs in *Death in the Making* revealed his political opinions and intense sympathy for the Loyalists. Modern combat allows soldiers and governments to depersonalize violence. They can perceive their enemies' casualties as numbers or objects instead of human beings. Capa came to Spain with the intent of personalizing the war, of rendering intelligible its human costs. He aimed to create images of the sufferers of the war, both on the front and at home, that would elicit

[30] Pete Turner, "Photographs- Demands and Expectations," in *Reading Photographs: Understanding the Aesthetics of Photography*, by Jonathan Bayer (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 80.

sympathy from the viewer and humanize the victims.[31] He tried to further his political agenda and garner support for the Loyalist cause by giving these victims a voice and gaining sympathy from his audience.

Capa's photographs from the Spanish Civil War were exceptionally well received by the media and public, not only because they encompassed the horror of the war, but also in part because they were some of the first images to capture live action from the battlefield. The Crimean War and the American Civil War were the first conflicts to be photographed; however, the cameras at the time did not have the capability to capture live combat. Roger Fenton, who is considered a pioneer of war photography, covered the Crimean War. The film he used required long exposure periods as well as immediate development in a mobile equipment carriage. Moreover, the technology prohibited him from shooting objects in motion. He was able to photograph only stationary subjects like posed officers and landscape. Matthew Brady faced similar limitations throughout his attempts to capture the American Civil War. The material of photographs had evolved to paper prints, but these prints still required long exposure times, fragile glass plates, and immediate access to darkroom chemicals and developing equipment.[32] Those needs combined with the difficulty of moving the heavy cameras and tripods prohibited the team from shooting live action. To deal with these limitations, Brady and his crew recreated horrific scenes of war and bloodshed by assembling corpses and staging photographs in a way that amplified the visual and emotional effects of conflict.[33] Photographers covering World War I

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[31] Robert Capa et al., *Heart of Spain: Robert Capa's Photographs of the Spanish Civil War*: from the Collection of the Museo Nacional Centro De Arte Reina Sofía (Denville, N.J.: Aperture Foundation, 1999).
[32] Michael Griffin, "The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism," in *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, by Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 135.
[33] Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Laurence King, 2002), 110.

were able to capture some of the horrors of the war, but still almost all of the photographs displayed the aftermath of the battles, featuring strewn bodies and landscapes destroyed by the trench warfare.

The Spanish Civil War was the first to truly be covered in the way we are familiar with because radical advances in camera and film technology allowed photographers to capture the war from the front line and have their work distributed to the world via newspapers and magazines. The new, lightweight Leica, used 35mm film which could be exposed 36 times before the photographer needed to reload the camera. The upgraded technology allowed photographers to be in the middle of battles and capture live action like they never had before.[34] The Spanish Civil War also occurred during the emergence of modern photojournalism as a legitimate source of news. People began to believe that photographs brought true views of the world's most important events to their living rooms and breakfast tables.[35] War photographers like Capa became, as a result, heroes risking their lives to bring home the truths from war. With the ability to throw themselves into the action on the front lines, Capa and his colleagues in Spain gained a kind of celebrity. They instigated a daring and risk-seeking attitude that caught the attention of the public and defined the ideals of war photography. Today, the "Robert Capa Gold Medal Award" in photography is given to the "best published photographic reporting from abroad requiring exceptional courage."[36] The photographers in Spain set a high standard for the self-sacrifice we expect from war photographers. They compelled the public to recognize photographers as influential public figures.

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[34] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 20-21.
[35] Michael Griffin, "Media Images of War," SAGE Journals 3, no. 1 (April 2010): 10, doi:10.1177/1750635210356813.
[36] "The 77th Annual Overseas Press Club Awards," L'Oeil De La Photographie, last modified April 28, 2016, accessed November 18, 2016.

Robert Capa and Gerda Taro traveled to Spain for the first time in August 1936 on an assignment to cover the war for a special issue of *Vu*. They arrived in Barcelona in the midst of a working-class revolution. The military uprising by the nationalists had been subdued and civilian workers turned militiamen donned boiler suits and rifles and gathered in the streets and in cafes.[37] The pair desired to cover loyalist victories; however, they observed only nationalist conquests and returned, disheartened, to Paris at the end of September. Capa returned to political reporting for some time because he thought Spain was now too dangerous and offered little photographing opportunity. Capa did return without Taro when the Siege of Madrid began in November 1936. Loyalist forces endured two grueling years of bombardment by Francisco Franco's army as they attempted to hold the city, eventually folding to the insurgent forces. The scene in Madrid provided Capa with arguably his most compelling subject matter from the entirety of the war. One month after arriving in Madrid, Capa took his photographs back to Paris. The public was extremely taken with both Capa's work and his persona. Over the next year, Capa migrated from Paris to Spain and back, sometimes alone and sometimes with Gerda. The final time that Capa returned to Paris from Spain in June of 1937, Gerda stayed on. She died on July 26 after covering the loyalist victory at Brunete.

Gerda and Capa had been lovers since the beginning of 1936; however, in the few months before her death, Gerda pulled away from the relationship. As her independence grew in her professional career, so did her emotional independence. He still loved her intensely and asked her to marry him in the spring of 1937, but she refused. When Capa left Spain in June, he left Gerda with a friend, Ted Allan, and told him to "take good care of her."[38] During their time together, Allan inquired whether she was going to marry Capa and she said, "I told you, he's my

[37] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 92.
[38] Kershaw, *Blood and Champagne*, 56.

copain, not my lover. He still wants us to marry, but I don't want to.[39] Whether Gerda's response reflected how she truly felt about Capa may never be clear. From these accounts, it seems that at the time of her death she felt or wanted to appear as though she did not need Capa's love. Notwithstanding her rejection, Capa became closer to Gerda in death than he had ever been in life.[40] Despite the terms of their relationship at the end of her life, Capa publicly recognized Gerda as his wife after her death. He absorbed this distorted version of reality and even claimed that he had been with her when she died.[41] In his photography, Capa always attempted to maximize the impact of his shots even if it meant changing the location of where he took a photograph for the press. These enhancements worked toward his personal agenda of promoting his self-image. It seems he used a similar approach to retroactively strengthen his relationship with Gerda. In keeping with this behavior, when Capa decided to publish a book of his and Gerda's photographs from the Spanish Civil War, he designed it to serve both as propaganda for the Republican/Loyalist cause and as a memorial to Gerda.[42]

[39] Ibid., 57.
[40] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 126.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 129.

Part III: The Book

Death in the Making

He may have called it Life in the Making with as much truth.

~Jay Allen

Covici Friede, Inc. published *Death in the Making* in New York on February 16, 1938 at the price of $2.50.[43] This was Robert Capa's first book. The collection of 145 photographs serves as a photographic history of the Spanish Civil War, captured through the cameras of both Capa and Gerda. The book had two other central contributors, Jay Allen and André Kertesz. Jay Allen translated Capa's captions into English and wrote the preface. Allen was an American journalist well known for his coverage of the Badajoz massacre in 1936.[44] He and Capa met in Bilbao in 1937. André Kertesz was a Hungarian photographer who pioneered the use of the hand held 35-millimeter camera in photojournalism, collected photography as fine art for exhibitions, and contributed to many of the most influential newspapers and magazines in Europe and the United States.[45] When he met Capa in 1934, Kertesz was already an extremely successful and highly respected photographer. He mentored many young photographers in the early 30s and Capa became one of these mentees.[46] When Capa decided to create *Death in the Making* he enlisted Kertesz to arrange the photographs.

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[43] "Books Published Today," *The New York Times* (New York), February 16, 1938.
[44] Jay Allen, "Slaughter of 4000 at Badajoz, 'City of Horrors,' Is Told by Tribune Man," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago), August 30, 1936.
[45] John Durniak, "Andre Kertesz, 91, Pioneer in Photography, Dies," *The New York Times* (New York), September 30, 1985, B10.
[46] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 61-62.

Paratexts

The paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public.[47]

~Gerard Genette

Death in the Making, like any other piece of literature, consists of more than just its main content. Often, we skip past the outside material, the preface, introduction, title, epigraphs, author's dedication, and move along to the main content. These parts are frequently considered ancillary. However, they provide critical context and insight for the reader into how and why the contributors to a work intended the content to be interpreted. By passing over these small additions, a reader can lose pivotal information that may not be present in the main text. *Death in the Making* relies heavily on its paratexts to deliver context to the reader regarding how and why the photographs were produced. One must look to the surroundings of the text to discover Capa's intentions.

The book's dedication shows Capa's intention to make a memorial to Gerda. He dedicates the work to her saying: "for Gerda Taro...who spent one year at the Spanish front and who stayed on."[48] Gerard Genette discusses dedications in *Paratexts,* claiming that the dedication is always designated for at least two recipients. One addressee is the dedicatee, in this case Gerda, and the other is the reader. A dedication is a public act to which readers act as witnesses. Capa's dedication to Gerda functions as a posthumous message of love to her and as a message to the reader that Capa loved Gerda and had a relationship with her. Capa wanted people to think that he and Gerda had been married and in love at the time of her death. Genette claims that "the dedication is always a matter of demonstration, ostentation, exhibition: it

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[47] Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.
[48] Capa, *Death in the Making*, 5.

proclaims a relationship...actual or symbolic."[49] His dedication to her, while undoubtedly full of true emotion, was another way for Capa to make known his fantasy version of their relationship. Capa was in his work and personal life constantly striving to perfect his fabricated persona. He made the adjustments needed to the truth to accommodate his goals and positively impact his image. The dedication helped his image because it publicly tied him to Gerda and it worked toward his goal of using the book as a propaganda tool. The pathos of dedicating a book to someone who has died raises the emotional stake of the work. The mention of Gerda's death at the start of the book humanizes and familiarizes the deaths depicted in the photographs that follow. This is a powerful tool to engage the reader emotionally.

Titles are significant because they are the first thing- and, generally, the only thing- the public sees. A title that provokes interest, controversy, and conversation fulfills its purpose. It is essential to distinguish between the purchasers and the readers of a text because the title is directed at many more people than the text. The title is a subject of conversation while the text is an object to be read.[50] Therefore, one can see why Capa's text was given a provocative and severe title. It is an effective conversation piece. Charles Grivel held that the functions of a title are to 1) identify the work, 2) to designate the work's subject matter, and 3) to play up the work.[51] Genette suggests that only the first function is obligatory. Capa's title fulfills the second function of designation through a thematic. It works as a tribute to the theme of the subject matter in the text. Specifically, it is metaphoric and employs the word death because one of the narrative's central themes is suffering and death.[52] A title must tempt the public but not be so effective that it is successful at the expense of the text. John Barth claimed that a book can be

[49] Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds*., 135.
[50] Ibid., 75.
[51] Ibid., 76.
[52] Ibid., 82.

better than the book that follows, arguing "a book more tempting than its title is better than a title more tempting than its book."[53] "Death in the Making" carries a critical amount of temptation in its thematic implications for the subject matter of the text; however, once a reader ventures into the text, he/she finds a much more complex narrative than that of merely death. There is also hope, resistance, and life. The title does not tell so much that the viewer feels it unnecessary to read the text.

Capa supplements the photographs in *Death in the Making* with captions of his own creation. He does not individually caption each photograph, rather he chooses specific moments in which to add additional power to a photograph through a caption. Elsewhere he uses the captions to provide readers with context. The content of a photograph exists for a viewer as the original subject existed. This notion constitutes a major difference between paintings and photographs, and an effect is that we tend to desire more context and explanation when observing a photograph than a painting. We long to know when, why and how it was captured by the photographer because of its seeming verisimilitude. An accompanying text completes the image(s) by arranging it within the context of a larger time and place. The text provides the reader with an experience of normal time rather than the instant in which the image was captured. In Ian Jeffrey's words, "the image is, as it were, domesticated; it becomes less disconcerting."[54] There can be a benefit to the shock impact of a photograph without a caption, but in some cases context can strengthen the emotional impact of an image. Capa opts to employ captions of varying length, and they afford the reader an effective method with which to place the images in the context of the events of the war. Rather than simply state the time and location

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[53] Ibid., 94.
[54] Ian Jeffrey, "Photographic Time and 'The Real World,'" in *Reading Photographs: Understanding the Aesthetics of Photography*, by Jonathan Bayer (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 84.

where he captured the instant, he animates the subjects of the images and externalizes his interpretation of their feelings at the time. In an image of Republican soldiers running across a field Capa writes, "Bullets sing past but the enemy keeps out of sight. The republican line moves forward to a better spot."[55] The caption does not deliver facts about the battle depicted in the photograph. It gives meaning to the urgency of the men by describing their proximity to death. Capa successfully enhances the drama in this photograph with his caption. Richard Whelan notes that it seems unlikely that the soldiers were running with bullets flying all around them because several other photographs from the same day show the soldiers and Taro casually standing around on the hillside.[56] This is one example of many where Capa uses Captions to reinforce or bolster the emotional effect of a photograph. These captions work to inspire sympathy for the Loyalist cause and further Capa's political agenda.

One of the final pages of the book illustrates Capa's purposeful use of captions. The left side of the page displays a Loyalist soldier opening a letter and a four-picture strip of soldiers smiling. Without looking at the caption, the snapshots emit a moderately joyful and warm mood. Capa adds to the page that the soldiers pictured "grew up together in the villages, worked side by side in the shops, the laboratories, and now fight side by side to hold what they won. They laugh often at memories of the past and when they talk of the future they smile proudly."[57] The addition of the caption allows the reader to develop a more intimate connection to the men featured. Their smiles are no longer arbitrary. They represent the Republican youth's hope for Spain's future. Additionally, they reinforce the concept that the Loyalist army was formed by the amalgamation of ordinary, untrained men with a prevailing purpose to defend their country from

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[55] Capa, *Death in the Making*, 17.
[56] Richard Whelan, *This Is War: Robert Capa at Work* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2007), 54.
[57] Ibid., 90.

a common enemy. Capa entices the reader to form a connection with the endearing faces on this page and then, as the reader's eyes move to the right side he reminds him/her of the harsh realities of war. The contrast of the right side of the partition to the left is powerful. We witness, through three photographs, soldiers with rifles running toward something, their arrival at a building, and a body strewn across rocks. Capa continues the caption from the previous page saying "many will not live to know that future" as "there is a war to be won" and that "the fine hope more often than not ends like this."[58] Though the photographs on these two pages likely feature different men and were taken on different occasions, Capa uses the text to establish a connection to the men on the left and then allows the reader to place those same men in the photographs on the right. The attachment to the subjects, enabled by the captions, amplifies the impact of the harrowing images that follow.

Motivated by his desire to display the desperate affairs of the Loyalists in *Death in the Making*, Capa used captions to maximize the emotional effect of his photographs. In one instance, he uses a caption to change the location of where he and Gerda captured a set of photographs after the pair just missed one of the many civilian targeted attacks by Franco's army. On February 8, 1937, Nationalist troops seized the Republican dominated city of Málaga. To avoid the resistance of the thousands of civilians trapped in the city, they opened one route by which the citizens could "escape." An exodus ensued down the 150-mile coastal road to Almería. Their retreat was terrible. They suffered extremes of temperature, hunger and exhaustion. The Nationalists pursued them on land and water and from the air, shooting and bombing at will, killing thousands.[59] The surviving refugees that did make it to Almeria were met by heavy

[58] Ibid.
[59] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 109.

bombing from Nationalist air forces.[60] This event marked one of the horrific massacres of civilians carried out by Franco's army. Photographs from this event would have displayed to the world the inhumane methods employed by the enemy and the degree of suffering endured by people in the city. Capa and Gerda did take some shots of the despairing conditions in Almería after the attack on the city, however; they missed the migration from Málaga. The photographs that Capa chose to include in *Death in the Making* in his section on the Málaga-Almería road were, in reality, taken by the pair at Cerro Muriano earlier that year.[61] He features photographs mainly of women and children because the public was probably desensitized to pictures of men dying. Those casualties were expected in the affairs of war. Pictures of children walking on a railroad and a mother carrying a semi-naked baby, noting that "they were bombed from the air, sniped at from the mountains, machine-gunned from foreign destroyers" is much more emotionally jarring. These photographs do more than show us Capa's dedication to creating propaganda for the Loyalists. They epitomize the dismal conditions of life across Spain during the war. Although Capa did not take these photographs in Almería, he could substitute them so that one would assume that they portrayed the situation in Almería. In this sense, it is even more effective to look at these photographs with the knowledge that they were not taken at one of the worst civilian massacres of the war. Capa seems to have taken advantage of the fact, noted by Susan Sontag, that "a photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture."[62] He was aware that even if he altered the truth in where he

[60] SHARP FIGHT RAGES FOR VALENCIA ROAD. (1937, Feb 14). New York Times (1923-Current File)
[61] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 110.
[62] Sontag, *On Photography*, 5.

took the photographs, the public would believe that the photographs showed happenings that existed.

The dedication and captions of *Death in the Making* reveal a great deal to the reader about Capa's character. The Robert Capa persona was a concocted fantasy. Because of his striving to fully adopt the persona, André Friedmann lived in a fantasy world of his own creation. His personality as Robert Capa was a half-truth, and often his work and personal life reflected a careless detachment from reality. Capa's construction of a false marriage with Gerda, imprecise captions, and enhancements for selected photographs reflect his constant attempts to perfect the Capa image. One cannot easily escape the irony that as a photojournalist Capa was meant to deliver through his photographs, to a certain extent, the truth. This work shows us that photographs are a reflection of their photographer. It presents a consciously curated view of his life and the war.

Jay Allen's preface acts as the connecting element between the title and dedication and the main content of the book, Capa's photographs. A reader who passes over Allen's text sacrifices a key component of understanding Capa's work. The most basic definition of the purpose of the preface, provided by Genette in *Paratexts,* is that its primary function is to ensure that the text is "read properly."[63] As Genette points out, this phrase is complex and implies more than a reader simply viewing a text. "Properly" implies that the preface gives some direction as to why the reader should study the text and how to interpret its contents. Jay Allen was tasked with both responsibilities. He needed to put a "high value" on *Death in the Making* that would compel readers to understand the importance of studying the book. This result would require him to make a case for why the photographs in the collection are critical to understanding Spain

[63] Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds*, 197.

during the war and both Capa and Gerda. In his preface, Allen clearly gives direction as to why the reader should study the text. He asserts that Capa and Gerda revealed the "the true face of Spain" through "very simple, moving photographs."[64] Without these photographs, this face was "blurred in ink and blood."[65] Allen expresses that when one witnessed the extensive bloodshed and "butchery" occurring in Spain, one could easily forget that a critical component of the war lay in the plight of a people "fighting for its life."[66] The same tendency occurs decades later as we study the war. We emphasize the action, adventure, horror and slaughter of the battles throughout the war and we unintentionally disregard the cultural and political aspects of the war along with the citizens behind the front. Allen fulfills the purpose of describing why these photographs are critical to understanding the war. He shows that Capa and Gerda give the reader many glimpses of overlooked aspects of the war.

Allen's contribution also had to carry instructions for how to interpret the book. He was obliged to deliver information to the reader that he deemed necessary to properly digest the contents. For Capa, seeing the war through the photographs in *Death in the Making* was an effective form of propaganda for the Loyalists. Allen's explanation to the viewer about how to interpret the contents of the book was likely motivated by this idea of drawing support. He speaks to the future of Spain claiming that "it will never be the same" as "no land can be where a mould centuries old is broken, where a million have died." He adds, however, that "that does not mean it will not be a better land."[67] With the knowledge that Franco was a mere few steps away from taking control of Spain, it appears unlikely that Allen and Capa's propaganda could have

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[64] Jay Allen, "Preface by Jay Allen," preface to *Death in the Making*, by Robert Capa, trans. Jay Allen (New York: Covici-Friede, 1938), 7.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 8.

impacted the Loyalists prospects. Whether they truly felt that support for the Loyalists could have made an impactful difference is unclear, but for his part Allen did provide the reader with abundant examples of the horrors of the Nationalist agenda. He strategically employs examples of his own experiences in Spain before and after the war to demonstrate how the war fundamentally altered the country. He poetically describes six Spanish cities that he enjoyed before the war and how they had each been destroyed either physically or culturally by the conflict. Spanish towns were not only defaced by the violence but many lost their cultural traditions. The influx of foreign bodies and forced migrations left some cities devoid of their prior spirit. Allen describes Deva, where he had once attended a fiesta. The Basques performed a cultural sword dance and German tourists harmoniously joined in with gifts of cider. "Now," Allen adds "the Germans in Deva are not tourists. They have to do with the technical side of the war."[68] This anecdote offers the reader a reminder of how dramatically the landscape of Spain was changed because of the war. It also recounts a more desirable time in Spain when citizens from the rest of Europe could travel the country freely and engage in life with Spaniards. Allen provides the reader with the pre-civil war ideal of Spain so that he or she might interpret the photographs in *Death in the Making* within that context and in turn find sympathy for the Loyalists.

[68] Ibid.

The Photographs

If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera.[69]

~Lewin Hine

The first photograph presented in *Death in the Making* is on the dust jacket. "The Falling Soldier" purports to capture the precise moment when a Loyalist militiaman was fatally shot and began to collapse.

This photograph "elevated Capa into the photojournalistic elite" and remains recognized as one of the greatest war photographs ever taken.[70] The photograph came to symbolize the great number of Loyalist Spaniards who were killed in the war and also Republican Spain, which was destroyed by Franco's forces. "The Falling Soldier" is surrounded by a great deal of controversy.

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[69] Sontag, *On Photography*, 185.
[70] Whelan, *This Is War*, 54-55.

In 1975, Phillip Knightley alleged that Capa staged the photograph, and since then the circumstances under which the image was made have been in question.[71] Historians and writers have poured over accounts of Capa's whereabouts, the geography of the background, and details of the man depicted in the photograph to discover the truth of its origin. Some researchers, like Richard Whelan, defend the image's authenticity, claiming the man in the picture, Frederico Borrell García, stood to pose for Capa and was shot from the enemy front.[72] Others like José Manuel Susperregui assert that Capa's picture is staged and could not have been taken at Cerro Muriano, as Capa claimed.[73] The controversy surrounding the image is representative of Capa's somewhat cavalier approach to truth. We have recognized several other occasions when Capa stated incorrect historical details or enhanced photographs. If this photograph was staged, it still showed the truth of the war as Capa saw it and wanted it to be perceived. The imperative question to consider when looking at "The Falling Soldier" is whether the photograph's authenticity matters. Richard Whelan argues that uncovering the truth of production behind "The Falling Soldier" is trivial. He asserts that "the picture's greatness ultimately lies in its symbolic implications, not in its literal accuracy as a report on the death of a particular man."[74] The photograph is presumably representative of countless men who died in the way that the man pictured did. If it was revealed that the photograph was undoubtedly staged, we would certainly not think differently about the atrocities that occurred throughout the war. Even if he did not accurately capture a man in the moment of death, perhaps the more important issue to Capa was

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[71] Ibid., 60.
[72] Richard Whelan, "ROBERT CAPA'S: FALLING SOLDIER," *Aperture*, March 2002, 55, accessed November 8, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24473053.
[73] Larry Rohter, "New Doubts Raised Over Famous War Photo," The New York Times, August 18, 2009, C1.http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1030675438?accountid=7118.
[74] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 100.

acknowledging and publicizing the notion that these soldiers were being shot in Spain. This photograph, real or staged, also supported Capa's personal ambition of being famous for risking his life to get the best shots. It captivated the world and propelled his career.

The photographs in *Death in the Making* are presented in a fluid chronological order as opposed to in distinct sections. Capa may have made the decision to present the book as one continuous story to compensate for the variable nature of his travels to and from Spain. The photographs begin with his and Gerda's journey to Barcelona and end with Gerda's last shots from Brunete. The first photograph is prefaced simply with the word "Start."[75] Capa does use concise headers throughout the book such as "The war of the man on the street," but these are more a preview for the reader rather than rigid dividers of content.[76] He does not insert a significant negative space that would imply a division between any two photographs in the book. The fluidity of the photographs implies that Capa and Gerda were in Spain for the entire period presented in the book, when, in fact, they were sporadically in the country for short periods of time and often not together.

One must award credit to André Kertesz' strategic arrangement of the collection, which allows the photographs to tell a complete story of Capa and Gerda's time at the Loyalist front. The fluidity of the photographs also accounts for the war as a continuous experience rather than a series of events. If the narrative had been organized around particular battles, the reader would not have witnessed the relentlessly poor conditions of daily life throughout the war. In addition to causing the reader to miss a crucial component of the war, this arrangement would have favored Capa's grisly photographs taken during or after battles, misrepresenting him as an artist

[75] Robert Capa, *Death in the Making*, trans. Jay Allen (New York: Covici-Friede, 1938), 12. Note: Pages are numbered beginning with first title page
[76] Ibid., 15.

as he heavily focused on capturing life on the outskirts of the actual conflicts. Instead, he guides the reader through a comprehensive understanding of the war, covering the time from shortly after the initial military uprising in early 1936 to the battle of Brunete in 1937. He begins and ends the book at moments in which the Loyalists experienced some gains or small victories. This arrangement intentionally leaves the reader with a cautious hope for the Loyalists.

Death in the Making functioned as a piece of propaganda: a tool to help amass support for the Loyalists. Capa published the book in 1938, before the end of the war, and likely hoped that if people read the book and sympathized with the faces in it, they would in some way join the cause against Franco's fascist army. At the time the book was printed, the future did not appear bright for the Loyalist front. The Nationalists began the new year with control of northern Spain after the Republicans were forced to surrender their last stronghold in Asturias. The battle of Teruel seemed hopeful for the Loyalists for a time, but the city eventually also fell to the Nationalists. With Franco's army steadily gaining territory across Spain, the Loyalists needed support immediately. Susan Sontag wrote that the "ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: 'There is the surface. Now think- or rather feel, intuit- what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way.'"[77] Capa provided snapshots of the war and relied on the effectiveness of his artistic choices to entice the reader to further explore the scenes emotionally. He desired for people to sympathize with the plight of the soldiers and the destitute citizens of Spain. His other photographs provided the public with a view into the sufferings of daily life during the war. Roland Barthes claims that photography's "noeme", or its essence, is to authenticate the existence of an object or being.[78] The objective nature of the actual image is such that the photographer, or to use Barthes' terminology the *Operator*, has little power to

[77] Ibid., 23.
[78] Barthes and Dyer, *Camera Lucida*, 107.

change the impact of the subject matter. The *Operator* can, however, arrange a collection of photographs in whichever way he finds to be most effective in achieving his desired impact. This act is one of many that photographers can perform, which can greatly impact the honesty of a photographs. In the case of *Death in the Making*, Capa employed André Kertesz to assist him in the presentation of the photographs with the goal of maximizing the work's capability as a propaganda piece. Capa and Kertesz strategically arranged the photographs to commence with the Republican victory in Franco's failed coup in Barcelona and Madrid and finish with the initial Loyalist victory at the Battle of Brunete. The reader immediately receives and is left with a sense of hope for the Loyalist cause. The audience of Capa's photographs was not to be just Spaniards but also a larger group of people in other countries observing the war from afar. Sontag writes that war photographs "are a means of making "real" (or "more real") matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore."[79] Capa intended to present the reality of the war as he saw it through his lens to the world. He attempted to make this book as emotionally effective as possible to garner support for the side he ardently supported. Though we know it to have failed, at the time it seemed as though the dissemination of these photographs could have had the power to influence the public to end the atrocities occurring in Spain.

Capa and André Kertesz designed *Death in the Making* such that it includes a combination of encouraging, spirited shots and emotionally intense moments. This intermittent use of both light and dark shows the reader both the horrific environment in these places and the spirit of the young soldiers fighting. Many of Capa's spreads published in *Vu* and *Regards* during the war consisted of a handful of his more somber and dark photographs. They featured decimated buildings, children in the street and panicked refugees. The 1936 issue of *Regards* that

[79] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 7.

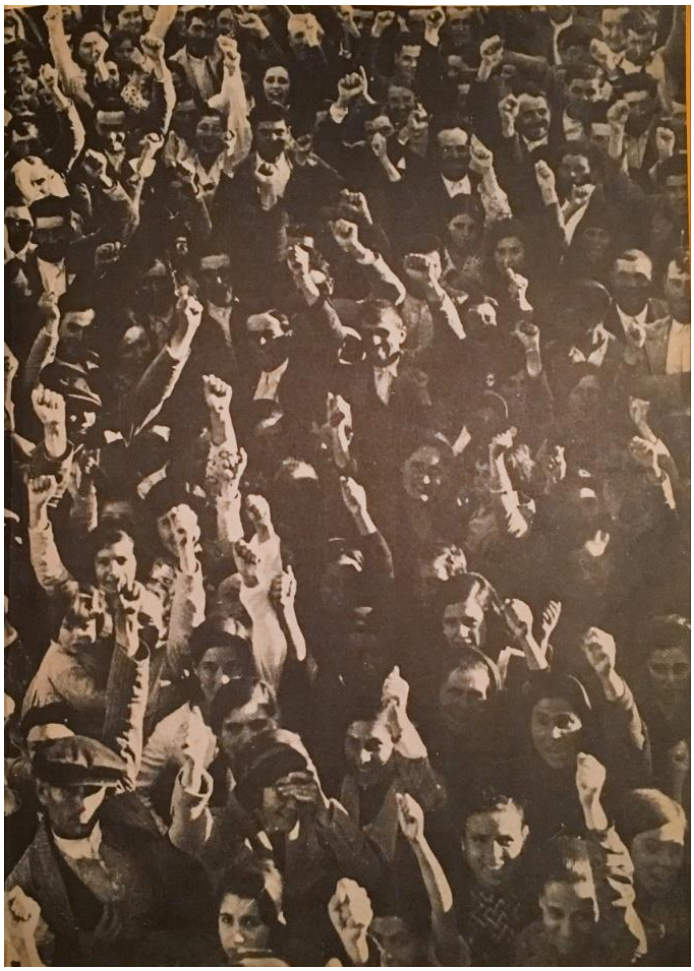
enabled Capa's celebrity reputation in Paris displayed a shot of two children sitting in front of a building riddled with bullet holes.[80]

These photographs are visually arresting because they provide an undisputable image of the living conditions in Spain. However, one must look at Capa's other work to absorb the ambition and courage of the Loyalist soldiers. It is only through the combination of photographs that show the light and the dark, civilians at home and soldiers at the front, that a reader can accurately grasp the meaning and impact of the civil war.

In *Death in the Making's* early photographs, Capa and Kertesz emphasize the hope and determination found in the Republican cause. These photographs largely describe the formation of the Loyalist army. They may have hoped that a reader would be encouraged to continue reading the book if they were not immediately drained of all hope for the Loyalist front. The first

[80] Ibid., 107.

photograph immediately following the preface, which covers an entire page, shows a seemingly boundless assemblage of what appears to be ordinary citizens[81]. They smile and collectively raise their fists in salute to a camera above. The angle is such that the people in the photograph look directly at the reader and invite him or her to join their cause.



The clenched fist salute, historically used by several radical political and social parties, became a Republican symbol during the war.[82] It signifies solidarity, pride and militancy. The symbol is, per psychologist Oliver James, “a way of indicating that you intend to meet malevolent, massive

[81] Capa, *Death in the Making*, 11.
[82] Kaleem Jaweed, "BACK STORY; Many reasons to raise a fist; In recent history, the gesture has been adopted in a variety of causes," Los Angeles Times, May 11, 2016.

institutional force with force of your own - you are an individual who feels bound with other individuals to fight an oppressive status quo."[83] This description encompasses the Loyalists' fierce intent to defend Spain from fascism. This purpose united Spaniards from the various autonomous groups in Spain that normally did not function as one. Capa notes that "Catalans, Andalusians, Aragonese, here and there a Castillian, a Basque, a Galician...united in a common cause at long last" to form an army of civilians. These groups made up what Capa calls the "old invertebrate Spain." [84] Capa and others who sympathized with the Loyalists hoped that if these fragmented groups could become one they could unite Spain and induce a people's revolution.

The following pages of *Death in the Making* tell the narrative of the formation of the Loyalist army and the chaos that defined the first months of the war. We observe ordinary citizens turned soldiers going off to the front, again enthusiastically saluting the crowd with clenched fists. Peasants walk along the highway outside Barcelona to join the new military order. In the wake of a Loyalist defensive victory, old friends, now soldiers in the "People's Army," reunite with back-slapping embraces.[85]

[83] Jon Kelly to BBC News newsgroup, "Breivik: What's behind clenched-fist salutes?," April 17, 2012, accessed November 5, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-17739105.
[84] Capa, *Death in the Making*, 23.
[85] Ibid., 18-21.

The Spanish Civil War was, as Capa states in a pseudo- section header, "the war of the man on the street."[86] This marked the monumental distinction between the two combatants in the war. The Nationalists controlled the forces of the Spanish military and received resources from foreign powerhouses Germany and Italy. The Loyalists, in contrast, formed an army from willing citizens and though they did amass some foreign support, they were technically outmatched on every front by Franco's army. Capa features three photographs on page 16 of *Death in the Making* which divulge the lack of military understanding on the Loyalist front. Unofficial militiamen and women who know nothing of war trenches lie on their stomachs and run in plain sight without protection while, according to Capa, bullets fly through the air.[87]

[86] Ibid., 15.
[87] Ibid., 16-17.

Though they were the dark horse of the war in technical skill, the Loyalists bore the greater weight, as they felt responsible for stopping the destruction of their country and death of their people. They were the "men on whom the burden of the defense of the Spanish public had fallen."[88]

Capa committed a significant portion of *Death in the Making* to presenting life in Madrid during the war. It was in Madrid that Capa found his fascination with the overlooked aspects of war. He began to realize that war consisted of more than just combat. His pictures from Madrid reveal that he was in the process of discovering that the "truth about war was to be found not only in the heat of the battle, in the official show, but also at the edge of things, in the faces of soldiers enduring cold, fatigue, and tedium behind the lines and of civilians ravaged by fear, suffering and loss".[89] Throughout his presentation of Madrid, one can see a shift in subject matter from soldiers at war to daily life in the midst of war. In these photographs, we see Capa's

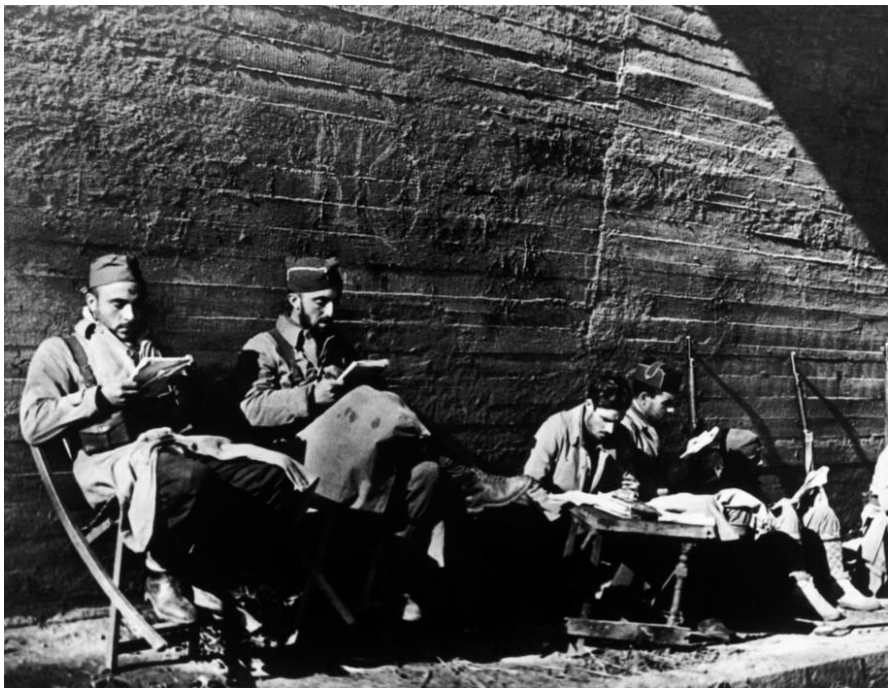
[88] Ibid., 22.
[89] Whelan, *Robert Capa*, 105.

reputation as a photographer of people come to fruition. They do not chronicle the events of the battle for Madrid, but rather record the happenings of soldiers and civilians away from the front. A photograph of the University of Madrid leads his account of the city. Here the reader witnesses Capa's powerful use of words in his captions. He writes that "the word no longer dominates in the University of Madrid; lead from rifles, from machine guns, from field artillery, is master now."[90] Without the caption, the reader may not have known that many of the students who attended the university before the war were again present in the buildings, but as soldiers. Desks on which students once studied now carried cannons and the few personal belongings of the soldiers who made the classrooms their home. The extent to which the war affected daily life is evident in these photographs as much as a shot of a soldier on the front.

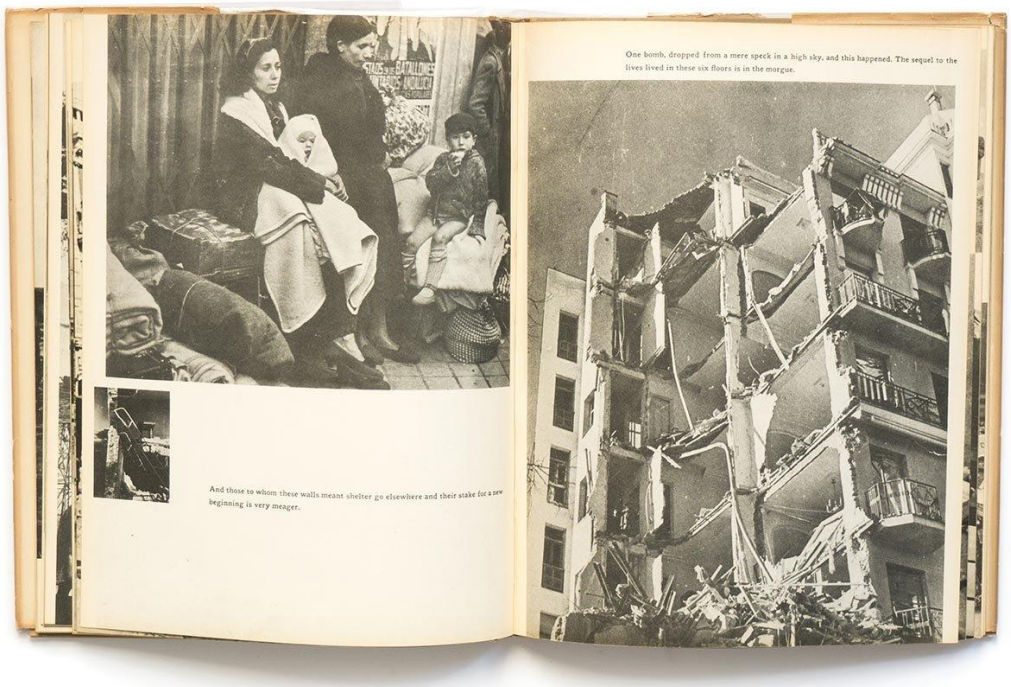
[90] Capa, *Death in the Making*, 27.

It is easy as a removed observer of war to perceive soldiers as existing only in the throngs of action on a battlefield. Capa reminds the reader in his discussion of Madrid that members of the Loyalist army were not unwanted guests on foreign land. "The dugouts [were] the outposts of their homes; this [was] *their* home."[91] Capa's deliberate use of the word "their" reminds the reader that many of Franco's reinforcements, performing his destruction throughout the war, were from Germany and Italy. They did not call Madrid or Spain home. The Spaniards under Franco's command found home in the future that they hoped to create for Spain, a future that would not resemble Spain under the Republic. The Republicans felt that if they held Madrid, the capital of the country, they had not yet lost their home. "No Pasaran" -- they shall not pass -- was the rallying cry of the inhabitants of Madrid, and it provided hope that the Loyalists could defend the city. When the enemy paused their offensive, Capa captured moments of soldiers engrossed in a game of chess or sitting in the sun writing letters home.[92] These photographs humanize the soldiers and again provide temporary relief from the otherwise grim nature of the war.

[91] Ibid., 34.
[92] Ibid., 34-35.



Capa shifts to showing the realities of life in a city under siege. The photographs exhibit severe physical damage to roads and the buildings where people lived. The photographs speak for themselves through the shocking displays of buildings with holes through them and women and children sleeping on the street and in the subways surrounded by their personal belongings. Capa's captions work to enhance the emotional impact of the images. A typical illustration of his use of language can be found above a photograph of the remnants of a residential building.



He adds, "One bomb, dropped from a mere speck in a high sky, and this happened. The sequel to the lives lived in these six floors is in the morgue."[93] Moving from a series of photographs which somewhat lightly reflect soldiers' leisure activities into shot after shot of dilapidation and destitute families, makes the emotional impression of the latter images even stronger. In war one expects, with dread, soldiers to suffer and perish. Capa reminds the reader that in this war, no one was spared from anguish. The war permeated every aspect of life. For those in Madrid, soldier and civilian, the war became routine. It decimated the comforts of home and replaced them with horrific living conditions and fear.

Death in the Making's contents flow seamlessly from portraying soldiers at the front and civilians at home in Madrid to discussing easily neglected aspects of the war that lie far from the front. There, Capa says, "life goes on. It must."[94] The first of these topics is "Spain's Wealth," referring to the fruitful mines of Almaden and collective farms, which provided the Loyalists with crucial metals and bread.[95] These two items, provided by factory workers and farmers are, fundamentally, the two commodities needed most during war. Capa dedicates two pages to these behind-the-front players to show that they contributed on par with soldiers to fuel and defend the Loyalist cause. The soldier cannot exist without the farmer who feeds him sustenance and the worker who supplies him with arms. He inserts some hopeful spirit into the narrative with a shot of young factory workers energetically raising their clenched fists in salute to resistance.

[93] Ibid., 43.
[94] Ibid., 48.
[95] Ibid.

Capa also alludes to the contribution of women and the clergy. Women stay behind the front, but "there are no non-combatants" in this war and "death finds them out."[96] He pays homage to Dolores Ibarurri who many called La Pasionaria, the Passion Flower.[97] She was a fierce political activist, founder of the Spanish Communist Party, and coined what Capa calls "*the* phrase of the war:" "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees! They shall not pass!"[98] Women adopted a variety of roles during the war from caring for the orphans of dead soldiers and to preparing cartridge belts for soldiers. Capa's discussion of non-soldiers' contribution to the war effort strengthens his presentation of the war's existence off the front. Capa aimed to turn the public's attention from the fighting on the battlefields to unexpected images of those contributing to the war on farms, in factories or at home.

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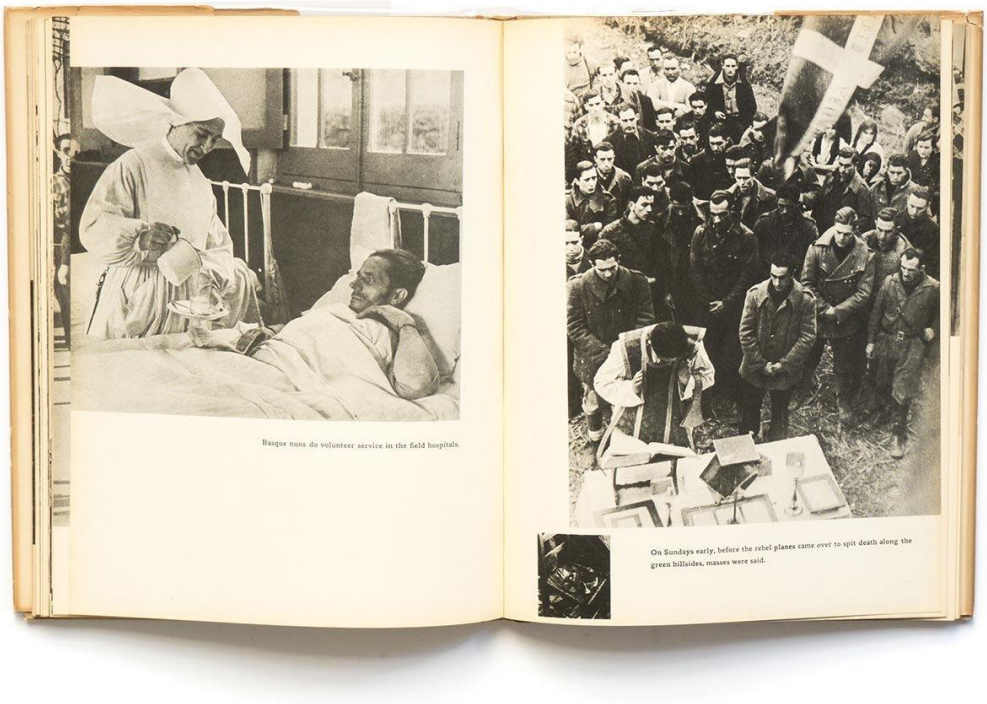
[96] Ibid., 75.
[97] Ibid., 76.
[98] Paul Hofman, "Dolores Ibarruri, 'La Pasionaria' Of Spanish Civil War, Dies at 93; An Indomitable Leftist," *The New York Times* (New York), November 13, 1989, accessed November 7, 2016.

The Catholic Church had a strong relationship with the Nationalists throughout the Spanish Civil War. Franco was a devout Catholic and promised to return Spain to its former glory with Catholicism as the national religion. Capa uses six photographs to acknowledge the Catholics in Bilbao who "refused to join in Franco's adventure."[99]



The priests and nuns in the Basque country aided the wounded in field hospitals, conducted mass on Sundays for soldiers and gave the dead Christian burials. Capa highlights the Catholic church's support for the Loyalists and excludes any mention of its relationship with the Nationalists. These managed images show that facet of the war from Capa's perspective, and the result is not necessarily a truthful representation of the church's overwhelming loyalty to Franco's cause.

Capa ends *Death in the Making* describing the rise of a new Loyalist army made of the youth of Republican Spain. He writes, "In Spain a new army *has been forged*. In Spain a new

[99] Capa, *Death in the Making*, 63.

nation *is being forged*."[100] The book shows two soldiers walking arm in arm, one of whom is clearly injured. Below, we see two soldiers carrying a corpse on a stretcher. These two photographs alone are poignant, but Capa raises the intensity of their effect even higher with his dramatic caption: "… the best blood of Spain spills in torrents over yellow land. Is spilled wantonly. Spills generously. The blood of men and women and boys, of worker, student, lawyer, peasant, mechanic, miner."[101] Capa employs every rhetorical technique he can to sensationalize these photographs. He forces the reader to confront the fact that all kinds of people have been killed in the war: soldiers and civilians alike. He then exposes the reader to the photograph of the dead man being carried away. The combination of the words and the photograph makes an even more compelling statement. The faces and bodies of the two soldiers walking together express exhaustion and vulnerability. Capa emphasizes the cruelty of the enemy and the Loyalists' desperate need for support. The final photograph in the book though is ultimately one depicting hope and pride. It displays soldiers holding up what Capa calls their "TROPHY, the rebel flag taken at Brunette" with their rifles. They carry the Nationalist flag in "triumph" in the wake of their short-lived victory. Though the Republicans were initially successful, they eventually suffered extreme casualties as the Nationalists counterattacked. Capa ends the book at the moment when the Loyalists thought they might be able to conquer their enemy and forge a new nation. Capa attempts to leave his readers with a feeling of hope in an effort to entice them to support the Loyalist cause and perhaps give meaning to the sacrifice of the fallen soldiers and civilians.

[100] Capa, Death in the Making, 94.
[101] Ibid.

Conclusion

Robert Capa's *Death in the Making* demonstrates that photographic works often reflect the convictions of the photographer. They represent the photographer's framing of the environment. The book reveals both Capa's political and personal agendas. Its paratexts and photographs provide a deliberately managed presentation of the war, which successfully provokes sympathy for the Loyalists and bolsters the perfect image of Capa's contrived identity. Capa's images are captivating and earned him status as arguably the greatest war photographer of his time. This analysis furthers the conclusions of the existing literature, which argues that Capa was a character larger than life who tended to manipulate and enhance his images to serve his objectives.

Photographers make choices that impact the nature of their images. Some photographs furnish evidence while others encourage fantasy. Those who use their images to support personal convictions capitalize on people's presumption of a photograph's absolute veracity. Robert Capa chose to promote his objectives through his work. Is this inherently negligent or inspired? Does he have a responsibility to provide his audience with the truth? As viewers, we expect paintings and sculptures to embody the interpretations of their makers. We do not necessarily expect them to emulate the truth. If photographers are artists like painters or sculptors surely they too should be allowed creative license and encouraged to express themselves through their compositions. Capa had fervent political positions and personal ambitions. He used *Death in the Making* to express and advance these positions, and he did achieve his purpose. Countless other artists and intellectuals in Spain also used their work to espouse their political philosophies. Pablo Picasso painted *Guernica* to depict the suffering endured when Nationalist forces bombed the Basque

town. The painting stood in exhibitions across Europe to fundraise for Spanish war relief, and it rose to fame as one of the greatest anti-war paintings in history. Juan Miró created propaganda posters for the Spanish Republic and etchings describing his interpretation of the horrors inflicted by the war. George Orwell created *Homage to Catalonia*, a personal account of his experiences in Spain and as a member of the Loyalist army. These artists, like Robert Capa, held a stake in the outcome of the Spanish Civil war. They used their work to express their interpretation of the conflict.

Numerous parties have tried to discredit Capa and the authenticity of his work. It is constructive to expose the moments when Capa took liberties with the truth, as this paper does, because they can reveal fascinating aspects of his character. However, these findings should not imply that his photographs were not worthy of the international recognition they received. As an artist, he is justified in constructing a subjective picture of the war and himself as well as actively handling his audience's perception of both. Capa's desire to portray an ideal self-image took him to highly dangerous zones in several wars and allowed him to produce extremely dramatic and impactful moments. And though he strove to completely assume the bold character of Robert Capa, it was ultimately André Friedmann's challenging background that provided him with a great sense of empathy for the victims of war.

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Biography

Ashley Godevais was born in Grenoble, France on January 13, 1994. She moved to Austin when she was four years old and enjoyed her time there so much that she decided to attend the University of Texas at Austin. She spent her Spring semester of junior year studying abroad in Barcelona, Spain. She graduated in December 2016 with degrees in Plan II Honors and Finance. She plans to move to Dallas in the Spring and begin her career in finance at PepsiCo.